



## A Sincere Thank You to Washington's AAH Crews

Another year has come and gone, yet your dedication to keeping the highways of Washington clean and litter-free remains strong. More than 100 new crews joined the Adopt-a-Highway (AAH) team in 2003, bringing the total number of AAH crews to an impressive 1,465. Even more impressive, over 300 volunteers have given their time and energy to this great program for more than a decade.

Together, the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) and the Department of Ecology spend about \$5 million each year on cleanup efforts. Your commitment to pick up litter and make this state beautiful for all of its residents and visitors equates

to approximately one-quarter of a million dollars in WSDOT employee work hours for 2003 alone.

Your pride in our state shows through your selfless work to keep our roadsides looking clean. Thank you for your time, effort, and commitment. You are truly valuable assets to your communities and our state as a whole.

Sincerely,

Doug MacDonald  
Secretary of Transportation

## Washington State's Adopt-a-Highway Founder to Retire

Gene Bremner, whose name is synonymous with the AAH program in WSDOT's Northwest Region, will be hanging up the litterbags next month after a career spanning almost 34 years.

Bremner's supervisor asked him to establish the program 12 years ago as a cost-effective way to help clean up litter along state highways. Other states had volunteer roadside cleanup programs in operation, and Bremner chose those used in Texas and Oklahoma as his models.



Gene Bremner

"Don't mess with Texas," and "Don't lay that trash on Oklahoma" were appealing slogans, but the volunteer highway cleanup programs in those states were operated on an informal basis. "We copied these programs, but made them more formal," Bremner explains.

"We started the program in what is now Northwest Region, then it went statewide."

As with any program of its size, AAH produced its share of interesting situations. Bremner recalls one incident involving a section of highway "adopted" by a Sons of Norway chapter.

"One of the members noticed a bunch of kids dumping trash on his section of highway and actually chased them down. He gave them the choice of being taken to the sheriff or going back and picking up their trash. The kids went back and picked up the trash."

Another time, a nudist group interested in adopting a section of roadway approached Bremner. "The group's representative asked me what

# Highway to Mount St. Helens Gets Extra TLC from Adoptive ‘Parents’

SR 504 in Cowlitz County, also known as the Spirit Lake Highway, runs from the city of Castle Rock just west of I-5, east up to the Johnson Ridge Volcanic Observatory on Mount St. Helens. One of the youngest highways in the state, SR 504 holds a special place in the hearts of current and former area residents. The existing highway was built in the late 1980s after the Mount St. Helens eruption and related Toutle River flooding destroyed the original highway that once ran alongside the river.

The new highway represents a link to the past for many people who used to live and play on the volcano before its eruption. It is also a source of community pride; it is the most popular way for visitors to access the national volcanic monument, one of the busiest national parks in the state.

The highway is just over 50 miles long from beginning to end, and boasts a total of 10 Adopt-a-Highway groups or individuals. Four of these “parents” are truly special in their exemplary commitment to keep their stretch of highway litter-free.

## Pioneer descendent stakes claim to section at ancestral home

Long before WSDOT started the Adopt-a-Highway Program, Longview resident Jean Carnine Bruner, 78, was cleaning up litter on SR 504 near the cross street named for her pioneering ancestors, the Carnines. When the program started, she immediately staked her claim on the two-mile section of highway in the Carnine Road/Schaffran Road vicinity near Silver Lake, and has been a volunteer since 1994.

“My family settled in this area in the 1800s and we’ve been here ever since,” says Bruner. “I consider it to be my road, and I don’t want to see it get trashed.”

Bruner sold her property to the state 10 years ago and moved to Longview when the highway was widened, but her son still lives in the area and Bruner continues to make the trip to her piece of the highway about once every other month to pick up litter. “It’s really satisfying work,” she says. “I’m getting good exercise and I’m helping improve the community—I just love doing it.”

In addition to removing the litter from the highway, Bruner also makes a point to separate out glass and plastic bottles and cans from the rest of the garbage for recycling. She’ll even take home clothes or towels that she finds on the highway that are still in good condition, wash them and donate them to charity.



*Jean Carnine Bruner keeps her stretch of SR 504 sparkling clean. Photo courtesy of the Longview Daily News.*

## Local REACT unit uses leapfrog technique to fight litter

For almost 12 years, the local Mount St. Helens Radio Emergency Associated Communications Teams (REACT) unit has been getting together several times each year to remove litter from SR 504 between the Toutle River Bridge and the intersection of SR 505 south of Kid Valley.

REACT is an international association of citizens band (CB) radio users who monitor their radios 24 hours a day from home, listening for distress calls from lost hikers or anyone who might need help on the mountain. If a member hears a call, they immediately contact the appropriate authorities and request assistance. The local REACT unit has 12 to 14 members in the Mount St. Helens area, with about six attending each highway cleanup effort.

The unit uses an effective leapfrog technique when they pick up litter. At the starting point, the crew will put out the signs and half of them will start picking litter. The other half take a truck with flashing lights about a quarter mile ahead where they leave it with the lights on. The second half of the crew will then start picking up litter heading away from the front of the truck. Once the first crew reaches the parked truck, they hop in and move it up ahead of the second crew’s position and the system starts over until the work is done. When finished, they load the truck with equipment and bags and head out.

## Family 'Brakes' for litter in remembrance

One year ago in March, two brothers, two sisters, and their spouses adopted a four-mile stretch of SR 504 between the two North Fork Toutle River bridges on either side of Kid Valley in memory of their parents, Jim and Gladys Brake. Before Mount St. Helens erupted, the entire family lived along the river near what is now the Toutle River sediment retention dam just north of their adopted section.

One week before Mount St. Helens erupted, Jim and Gladys moved away, and the house was swept away in the floods. Jim and Gladys' children—son Jack Brake and his wife Joann, son Perry "Buzz" Brake, daughter Janice Bearse and her husband Bill, and daughter Sally Neufeld and her husband Larry—now live in Steilacoom, University Place, and Winlock. Despite the long trip between their homes and adopted highway, they've been out to clean litter four times.

This section of the highway is very special to my family," said son Jack. "We adopted it as a way to honor the memory of our parents, and because it's nice to go back home."

The family makes the litter picking trip fun by having contests amongst themselves as they work. For example, the first person to find 10 cans gets a free lunch. Sometimes



*The Brake family after a recent cleanup. From left to right: Perry Brake, Sally Brake Neufeld, Larry Neufeld, Joann Brake, Jack Brake, Jan Brake Bearse and Bill Bearse.*

they have a picnic lunch at the place where their family home once stood.

"My brother and I often hunt and fish in the area we adopted, and every time we go out we check our section for litter," said Jack. "If we see any, we immediately schedule another trip to clean it up—it's a matter of family pride now."

### Retiree dedicated to preserving and promoting volcanic monument

Before the eruption of Mount St. Helens, Longview resident Robert Andrew, 77, and his family would often make the drive up the mountain on the old Spirit Lake

Highway to visit the beautiful recreation areas. Andrew's love for the mountain didn't diminish even after the eruption destroyed its once-lush green forests and muddied the once-clear rivers and streams.

After retiring from the Port of Longview after 40 years, Andrew decided to spend his free time volunteering at the Coldwater Ridge Visitor Center and the Johnson Ridge Volcanic Observatory at the end of the new Spirit Lake Highway, SR 504.

Shortly thereafter, the WSDOT Adopt-a-Highway program started. In 1994, Andrew officially adopted a two-mile section of SR 504 near the Coldwater Ridge Visitor Center. Since then, Andrew has set himself apart within the program by the frequent visits to pick up litter in his area. Because Andrew volunteers as an interpreter at the Coldwater Ridge and Johnson Ridge centers at least once a week in the winter and several times a week during the busy tourist season, he'll pull over and pick up litter in his section (and other areas as well) every time he drives up the highway. That's well over 50 cleanups a year, which demonstrates true dedication.

"The drive up this highway is beautiful," Andrew says. "It's my home base and I hate to see it get trashed in any way."

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the volunteers needed to wear on the job and I just said be sure to have a hard hat, safety vest and hard toed shoes. I didn't get into further details."

Throughout his career, Bremner has seen numerous changes in roadway maintenance. "The biggest impact on the work was automation. When I started, I worked on the last of the sand spreaders where a maintenance worker in the truck bed had to shovel sand into the spreader."

The Adopt-a-Highway Program was also beyond anyone's imagination at that time. "There were 55-gallon drums along the highway for trash disposal. We had to hoist those drums into trucks so the garbage could be hauled away," Bremner recalls.

When asked what his plans are after retirement, Bremner replies, "I'm going to spend time catching up on various home improvement projects."



# Alcoa Employees: A Cleanup Force to be Reckoned With

WENATCHEE – It was an all-out assault on litter. Passers-by would think the program was “Capture the Highway” rather than Adopt-a-Highway. Alcoa Aluminum Company employees at the Wenatchee Works remain on the payroll and working, despite the cold pot lines and the plant producing no metal. Besides upgrading and preparing the plant to restart when metal prices rise or power rates drop, the 400 employees have donated 85,000 hours to community service in the last year.

A two-mile segment of US 2/97 between Monitor and Wenatchee in Chelan County was the beneficiary of 217 of those hours. It was a spring and fall litter cleanup effort like none other conducted in the region. The Wenatchee Works Carbon Plant employees approached the litter project like they do their work; a well-planned team effort.

Thirty-one employees watched the safety video and studied the safety tips brochure. The video was a pleasant surprise. Bill Nye, the Science Guy’s narration and presentation made the information memorable and entertaining at the same time.

Each employee was outfitted with company-provided safety gear including gloves, helmets and vests. Alcoa made arrangements with Boswell’s furniture store, located at one end of their highway section, to use the parking lot and brought in their own portable rest rooms for the day.

WSDOT provided a large supply of bags as well as the portable signs to alert travelers of the cleanup effort underway on the road shoulders ahead. Alcoa vans ferried

teams of employees to locations throughout the two-mile section and in 3½ hours the work was done ... and then some! Thirty-one enthusiastic litter collectors ranged well beyond the 75-foot highway right-of-way, continued an extra mile west on both sides of US 2/97, cleaned the entry road to the adjacent Wenatchee River Chelan County Park and the county road in front of the furniture store!



*Alcoa's Litter Cleanup Army.*

Thirty-five bags of litter, numerous collections of discarded lumber, tires, appliances and other bulk trash were neatly piled on the shoulders for the WSDOT pickup crew to collect and dispose of. The safety training paid off when one crew discovered hypodermic syringes discarded off the highway. They properly staked the area with red haz-mat tape and assigned two of their members to “guard it” until authorities arrived to properly dispose of the “find.”

Carbon Plant Manager, Don T. Walton, said, “Besides the health and safety benefit to drivers and the community from the cleanup effort, the employees enjoy doing it. You get to see the fruits of your labor immediately.”

## You catch more flies with honey . . .

When John Walker, Chief Master-at-Arms, took over the coordination of the four-mile stretch of SR 308 adopted by the Navy for clean up, a little over 50 volunteers per quarter were showing up on litter pickup days. Having been the coordinator on his previous tour on the USS Camden, Walker had some ideas about how to get an even better turnout.

Walker began making fliers and newsletters about the next pickup day and posted them around the command center. He also

sent e-mails globally to reach the maximum audience. Walker obtained approval and offered prizes for certain kinds of litter finds. The participation of volunteers increased from 15 to 20 percent for civilians and 50 percent for military.

“I have always liked being outdoors,” said Walker. “This is a great way to help make our community look better and get families and members of the command together.”

One lucky volunteer’s find of a mouse in a beer bottle won him two movie tickets.

Another volunteer picked up a whopping seven bags of trash and won a 24-hour shift off of work. And the prize for the heaviest piece of trash went to a young man who found a refrigerator.

The Navy adopted the stretch of highway from the Bangor Main Gate to Virginia Loop in 1991. Litter pickup days are held four times a year. For more information about making the most of your littler day pickup, contact your regional coordinator (see back page for list).

# Littering Becomes Even More Painful

The Department of Ecology's (Ecology) "Litter and it will hurt" campaign, first launched in April 2002, attempts to reduce roadway littering by informing the public that littering carries hefty fines that hurt financially. In July 2003, littering became even more painful, with fines associated with potentially dangerous litter (including lit debris) increasing to \$1,025.

Another strategy Ecology used this summer to further the campaign and address the litter problem in Washington State was partnering with a variety of businesses and broadcasters.

Beginning July 1, 1.25 million litterbags containing litter prevention messages were distributed to

drivers around the state. McDonald's restaurants, FOX Sports Net Northwest, Warm 106.9 FM, the Washington Forest Protection Association, the SuperMall in Auburn, Ronald McDonald House Charities, and the Pacific Science Center in Seattle supported the distribution.

"Keeping litter off the roads is a tough and expensive job," said Megan Warfield, Ecology's litter program coordinator. "It's great to have such tremendous support from our partners."

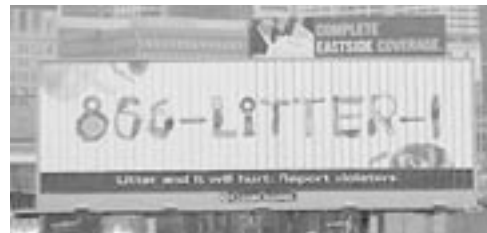
In addition to the litterbag distribution and new fines, the first "Litter and it will hurt" campaign billboard appeared

April 23, 2003, at the intersection of 4th Avenue South and Interstate 90 in downtown Seattle, next to Seahawks Stadium. The catchy billboards, which feature the litter hotline phone number created with images of actual litter, continued to pop up in selected markets throughout the state all summer. The campaign is reaching more motorists with the 149 "Litter and it will hurt" signs that have been placed along state highways. Motorists are

encouraged to call the hotline and report violators.

For more information about the "Litter and it will hurt"

campaign, visit [www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/swfa/litter](http://www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/swfa/litter).



## A decade of dedication

We are very proud to report that more than 300 groups have volunteered their time to AAH for 10 or more years. Please visit: [www.wsdot.wa.gov/biz/adoptahwy/10yearmember.pdf](http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/biz/adoptahwy/10yearmember.pdf) to view all of their names.

## Celebrate Earth Day – schedule a litter pickup

Earth Day is a celebration to raise awareness of our environment and to promote conservation of our natural resources. Earth day is Thursday, April 22, and in honor of this day we encourage all of the Adopt-a-Highway crews to schedule a litter pickup sometime during this week. Please visit: [www.earthday.net](http://www.earthday.net) for more information about Earth Day events and activities.

## Supplies: MIA

In the past, supplies such as first aid kits and rotating lights have not been returned after their use. Please do your part to make sure supplies are returned in a timely manner. This reduces replacement costs and also ensures that each AAH crew has the necessary supplies when they need them.

## Address changes

Please submit any changes in your contact person or address to your AAH WSDOT coordinator. This keeps us informed of the most current information and, in turn, helps us send out newsletters, awards and other information as efficiently as possible.

## We need your help

We have not received all of the forms for those of you picking up litter. It's very important that we receive your forms so we can give you credit for picking up litter. In addition to giving you the credit you deserve, it helps us track who has picked up litter and also helps to determine how much litter has been collected each year. So, please take a few minutes to fill out your forms and submit them to your AAH coordinators.

### Adopt-a-Highway, Washington Style

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# Safety First

The Adopt-a-Highway cause that you are supporting is very important, but even more important is the safety of you and your fellow crew members. As with any work that is done along the highways, there is a certain degree of risk involved. This is why safety must be the first consideration when going out to pick up litter. WSDOT provides all AAH crews with orange safety vests, hard hats, warning signs, and vehicle-mounted strobe lights to be used each and every time you go out to pick up litter.

All AAH volunteers are encouraged to review the video shown to first-time volunteers, even if you've been volunteering for many years. It is also a good idea to review safety rules each time you schedule a litter pickup. In the 12 years that the program has been active,



there has never been a traffic-related accident with any of the AAH crews and WSDOT along with everyone else involved wants to keep this safety record flawless.

A growing safety concern over the last few years is the increasing amount of waste from methamphetamine labs being left on the highways. These discarded products can be hazardous to your health and should not be touched. If you come across any items that look like they may be the waste from a meth lab or other hazardous materials, do not pick them up. Mark the location and contact your AAH coordinator immediately. WSDOT will notify the appropriate law and hazardous materials agencies.

For any safety questions or issues, or if your group needs any of the safety supplies provided by WSDOT, please contact your AAH coordinator.

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